

TWELVE METHODS OF CUPPING THERAPY

9

CHAPTER CONTENTS

WEAK (LIGHT) CUPPING (TONIFYING METHOD), 92

MEDIUM CUPPING (TONIFYING METHOD), 94

STRONG CUPPING (DRAINING METHOD), 95

MOVING CUPPING – TUI GUAN FA (DRAINING METHOD), 98

LIGHT-MOVING CUPPING (EVEN METHOD), 100

NEEDLE CUPPING (DRAINING METHOD), 102

HOT NEEDLE AND MOXA CUPPING – AI GUAN FA (TONIFYING METHOD), 104

EMPTY (FLASH) CUPPING – SHAN GUAN FA (TONIFYING METHOD), 106

BLEEDING/WET/FULL CUPPING – XUE GUAN FA (DRAINING METHOD), 109

HERBAL CUPPING – YAO GUAN FA (TONIFYING METHOD), 112

WATER CUPPING – SHUI GUAN FA (EVEN METHOD), 114

ICE CUPPING (COOLING) METHOD, 116

REFERENCES, 117

See online materials

As mentioned earlier, cupping has long been extensively practised within traditional Turkish communities, and I grew up in this environment, seeing the way it was practised and many times experiencing its benefits myself. I am convinced that cupping as practised today in most European countries is the legacy of the Ottoman Turks and their use of cupping in Hamams. The method my mother would generally use was straightforward and simple. She would oil our skin first and then apply up to six cups (or empty jam jars) for only 2 or 3 minutes, repeating the process several times. The cups were almost always applied on the back of the body (i.e. the upper part of the shoulder blade, or the lower back). This was the way I grew up to know and practise cupping, until I studied traditional Chinese medicine in 1983.

The first day at Professor Wong's clinic in Northcote, Melbourne, was, indeed, a memorable one for me. This was my first clinical practice day, having completed my studies. A senior practitioner was showing the novice what was expected during the first few weeks. The duties included preparing balls of cotton wool to be soaked in alcohol, sterilizing needles and other equipment, answering telephone calls and washing the cups used the previous day! To my colleagues, these strange-looking glass objects were the most fascinating tools of the trade, alongside the acupuncture needle. The principal of the academy, Professor Wong, was a great acupuncturist and herbalist, but above all he was a tactile therapist and a great believer in the healing power of massage and cupping. With almost every patient, his prescription would end with cupping or a massage treatment. I often volunteered to work at his Northcote clinic, where I learned the comprehensive use of cupping techniques. However, over the last 30 years in my own practice, and during my studies in China, I have developed some methods of my own and have been able to bring together 12 different cupping techniques (10 methods mentioned in the first edition of this book and 11 in the second). Over the last 13 years since the first book was published, I have received hundreds of letters and emails enquiring about the different techniques I mentioned in the book. Most readers described the cupping methods as 'intriguing', 'interesting' and 'fascinating'.

All 12 methods described below represents the most fundamental concept of this book: the cupping therapy and its organic association with Qi, Blood and the Wind element. All methods illustrated below therefore are designed to help the practitioner chose the cupping technique during the treatment protocol that is most appropriate to the patient's Qi/energetic condition. I am often asked by some patients to perform cupping treatment often unsuitable for their present energetic circumstances, such as Bleeding or Strong cupping methods, because of a magazine article they have seen or read! Like all other forms of medicine, cupping therapy is not a 'magic cure-all' but one that needs regular application, as well as the 'correct' technique most suitable to the individual's current condition.

Twelve Cupping Methods

- Weak (Light) cupping
- Medium cupping
- Strong cupping
- Moving cupping
- Light-moving cupping
- Needle cupping
- Hot Needle and Moxa cupping
- Empty (Flash) cupping
- Bleeding/Wet/Full cupping
- Herbal cupping
- Water cupping
- Ice cupping

WEAK (LIGHT) CUPPING (TONIFYING METHOD)

See online materials

Weak cupping is employed when Blood and Qi are sluggish, deficient (Xu) or stagnant, and a reversal of these conditions is desired. *The action of Weak cupping is intended to strengthen the Wei Qi, remove Wind, stagnation of Blood, Qi and Body Fluids and at the same time tonify the weak Qi and Blood*, and it is therefore termed a 'tonifying' method. The key factor in deciding when to apply Weak cupping is the present energetic state/condition of the patient. Pulse, tongue and visual diagnosis should all point to a deficiency.

Application

The patient and cups are prepared as described earlier, and the skin is moistened with oil. The practitioner should light the cotton wool and wait for a few seconds so that the fire is less intense when introduced into the cup. Remember, *the bigger the fire, the greater is the suction*. Apply the cups at the desired points until all have been used. At this point, the practitioner should take immediate note of the suction inside the cups. The amount of flesh drawn into the cups should be minimal and hardly raised. Should the initial suction be stronger than originally planned, the practitioner should press the edge of the cup with an index finger and let in some air to reduce the strength of the suction to the desired level. At no time should the patient feel an uncomfortable sensation of pulling or pain on the treatment area. If this happens, the practitioner should continue with the reducing technique until the patient feels comfortable. Weak cupping is the gentlest method of all and is particularly suitable for debilitated adults, elderly patients and young children, especially those under 7 years of age.

Light cupping can be applied almost anywhere on the body, and may cause a slight reddening of the skin, rather than a deep, dark cupping mark or blister. Therefore, the duration of Weak cupping can be as long as 30 minutes. When Light cupping is performed on hairy or very dry skin, the suction is likely to cease much earlier than planned. In this case, the practitioner should apply oil liberally and repeat the procedure. The gentle pulling action of this method stimulates the movement of Qi within the meridian system, bringing benefit to the patient and tonifying the Blood and Qi without the risk of further depleting energy in weak and frail patients (Colour Plate Figure 1, Fig. 9-1A, B).



FIGURE 9-1 Weak cupping.

Conditions Most Suitable for Weak Cupping Method

- Common cold
- Sore throat
- Tonsillitis
- All abdominal and digestive complaints
- For people recovering from an illness or an operation
- All children under 16 years of age
- Asthma
- Anaemia
- Blood and Qi tonification
- Facial complaints including Wind-stroke (Bell's palsy) and cosmetic treatments
- Psychosomatic and emotional conditions
- Immune deficiency syndromes
- Fatigue
- ME sufferers
- Multiple sclerosis (MS) patients
- Cancer patients
- Expectant mothers.

CASE 9-1 Ms J – 36 Years Old and 6 Months' Pregnant (Restlessness with Poor Sleep)

Six months pregnant, Ms J, complaining of 'restlessness and poor sleep', came to see me. She already has 3 children all under 10 years old! She has not been able to have a 'quality sleep' for some time. She has a 'good home life' and follows a 'good diet'. Despite this, once she goes to bed, she tosses and turns and not being able to sleep makes her restless and moody, and the cycle continues until she gets exhausted and falls asleep. As a result she is getting up each morning feeling extremely tired and irritable.

Pulse. Rapid, weak at all levels.

Tongue. Red and dry body (sometimes gets sore tongue).

Medication. None.

Observation. Woman of medium build, reddish face, dry skin (all over the body) and dark circles under the eyes.

TCM Diagnosis. Chronic Kidney-Qi and Yin deficiency resulting in Heart Fire.

Treatment Principle. Tonify the Kidneys and the Lungs and Clear the pathogenic Heat.

Cupping Application. After 4 weeks of weekly cupping sessions, employing the Weak cupping method to the entire upper back of the body, she felt calmer and her sleep pattern returned to normal. Points concentrated on during the treatment were: Du-14 Dazhui, Du-12 Shenzhu, BL-13 Feishu, BL-15 Xinshu, BL-20 Pishu, BL-23 Shenshu and BL-42 Pohu.

Additional Therapy. Acupuncture.

CASE 9-2 A 25-year-old Woman with MS

Four years ago, Ms A had suffered a stroke-like lesion to the brain resulting in paralysis of the right side of her body and loss of speech. Within 2 months she recovered completely. Three years later, she had a similar attack but this time to the opposite side, which affected the left side of her body resulting in weakness of her left leg, left hand and poor speech. Her neurologist diagnosed it as an 'attack similar to multiple sclerosis'.

Medication. She was on steroids (but stopped by now) and Prozac.

Pulse. Even but weak, Liver pulse dominating (she gets frustrated and irritable quickly).

Tongue. Good body colour, trembling.

Observation. Thin, slightly on the pale side, likes to talk (speaking is an effort but perseveres) and has a sense of humour!

TCM Diagnosis. Blood and Qi deficiency with Wind pathogen invading the channels.

Treatment Principle. Tonify Blood and Qi and remove the invading pathogenic Wind.

Cupping Application. Weak cupping to the front and the back of the left leg and the entire upper back of the body. Cupping sessions were limited to 15 minutes with repeated applications to the same locations. After five sessions she reported 'feeling better'. The treatment is still ongoing.

Additional Therapy. Acupuncture, moxibustion and dietary.

Summary Points

- Tonifies Blood and Qi
- Strengthens the Wei Qi
- Removes pathogenic Wind
- Blood, Qi and Fluid stagnation
- Benefits children, adults recovering from illness, the elderly and the frail.

MEDIUM CUPPING (TONIFYING METHOD)**See online materials**

This is the most frequently used cupping method on patients with relatively strong Qi. *It manipulates the Wei Qi, Qi, Blood, lymphatic system and the external 'Wind' element (Wind-Heat and Wind-Cold).* Medium cupping can safely be administered to children over 7 years old, as well as to adults. With Medium cupping the suction is firmer but, as the patient's own Qi is also good, it will act as a tonifying method. However, there is a real danger of draining the patient's Qi if the cups are left on for longer than 30 minutes, leaving the patient lethargic. This is also the most effective method when dealing with the 'External Wind invading channels' pattern.

Application

To achieve a Medium suction the practitioner needs to use a bigger fire than with the Light method. The cups must also be held closer to the patient, to enable the practitioner to be quick in applying them; the suction will be firmer as the fire draws out the oxygen, thus creating a stronger vacuum. With this method the skin is pulled well into the cup, creating a slight redness as mentioned earlier (Fig. 9-2, Colour Plate Figure 2). If the cups are left on for longer, the redness will turn to dark red or purple, indicating a stronger application. If glass cups are used instead of the more traditional bamboo cups, the progress can be observed closely and early adjustment made if desired. Medium cupping can safely be applied anywhere on the body, including the face and abdomen.

Conditions Most Suitable for the Medium Cupping Method

In addition to the conditions mentioned above:

- Hot or Cold 'Bi' syndrome
- Stress-related conditions
- Headache
- Blood and Qi tonification
- Children's ailments
- Infertility complaints
- Sports injuries
- Musculoskeletal complaints
- Tremors and fits.



FIGURE 9-2 Medium cupping.

CASE 9-3 J – a 79-year-old Woman (Shingles with Lower Back and Shoulder Pain)

J had been suffering from shingles for over 4 months when she came to see me. She was waking up several times during the night owing to the pain. Lately she had also been complaining of lower back and shoulder pain. She also looks after her husband who is wheelchair bound, due to his severe respiratory condition.

Pulse. Slightly rapid, otherwise good.

Tongue. Red body proper, with thick yellow coating.

Medication. Blood pressure tablets, thyroxine and paracetamol.

Observation. She is well built and looks excellent for her age.

TCM Diagnosis. Wind-Heat attack with ‘Hot Bi’ syndrome.

Treatment Principle. Clear the pathogenic Heat and manage the ‘Bi’ syndrome.

Cupping Application. Weekly treatment to the upper back (avoiding the shingles area), and the lower back, employing Medium cupping technique for 5 weeks, helped to reduced her symptoms significantly. At the start of the treatment, two sessions of Bleeding cupping to Du-14 were also employed.

Additional Therapy. Acupuncture and herbal ointment.

Summary Points

- Tonify Blood and Qi
- Strengthen Wei Qi
- Elevate the Shen (Spirit)
- External Wind-Cold invading the channels
- Internal Wind-Heat
- External Wind-Heat
- Lymphatic drainage
- Benefits adults and children over 7 years old.

STRONG CUPPING (DRAINING METHOD)

🖱 See online materials

Blood and the ‘internal Wind’ are the principal targets of this method. This is also one of the most draining techniques of all (Moving cupping is the other). Therefore, before deciding on Strong cupping the practitioner must ensure the suitability of the patient. Significant amounts of Blood and Qi are manipulated by this method, sometimes leaving the patient tired. Pulse, tongue and visual diagnosis should all emphasize an Excess, Full (Shi) condition. Defensive Qi (Wei Qi) is most affected and influenced by this method. The purpose of a Strong cupping treatment is to move Blood and Qi and eliminate internal/external pathogenic factors (internal Wind) and stagnation from patients with relatively strong Wei Qi. It is suitable for all forms of chronic musculoskeletal complaints and Blood stasis syndromes.



FIGURE 9-3 Strong cupping.

Application

The practitioner should prepare the patient and have the cups close at hand. For a Strong cupping technique a big fire is necessary in order to achieve a strong pulling action. For this reason, a rather large ball of cotton wool is taken, or two held together by forceps. On igniting the cotton wool, the fire is inserted into the cup without delay, and simultaneously the cup is turned onto the skin. A strong vacuum will be produced, giving a strong pulling sensation of the skin inside the cup. Because of the strong nature of the pulling action the skin will quickly turn red, and shortly after turn purple, inside the cup (Fig. 9-3). It is preferable to avoid the Strong method on a patient's first visit and introduce the treatment using a much weaker version, explaining that subsequent treatments will be slightly stronger. When using a Strong cupping method for the first time a very dark red cupping mark is inevitable; this can take up to 15–20 days to disappear completely. The cupping time should also be short: between 3 and 5 minutes during the first session. This can be increased up to 20 minutes in later applications. The dark-red cupping marks will become much lighter and the dispersal time much shorter, sometimes lasting only a day or two (Colour Plate Figure 3).

Following an acupuncture session, Strong cupping treatment may cause a small amount of blood to be drawn into the cup. This is quite acceptable given the strength of the suction applied by this method. Fine capillaries under the skin can also break relatively easily with strong suction, causing deeper and longer-lasting cupping marks. This is also the only method of cupping that can cause blisters to form rather quickly. Therefore, it is strongly advised that the practitioner should remain with the patient at all times during the treatment, observing the progress of the suction and, if necessary, removing the cups earlier than planned. One way of obtaining a Strong suction is to employ the wick method described in Chapter 7. When using the pistol handle cupping gun, three complete pulls also produces a Strong suction.

The Strong cupping method should be avoided on the face, stomach, abdomen, on children under the age of 16, the elderly and frail, and also during the entire period of the pregnancy.

Figure 9-4 shows the effect on the skin of the Weak, Medium and Strong cupping methods.

Conditions Most Suitable for Strong Cupping Method

- All excessive Heat conditions such as Stomach Heat, Liver Heat, Damp-Heat and febrile diseases
- Hypertension
- Headache

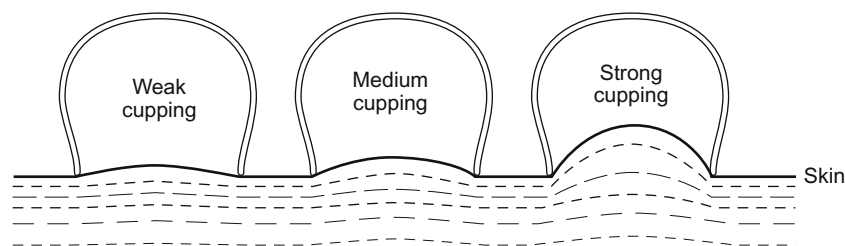


FIGURE 9-4 Section of the skin showing the effects of Weak, Medium and Strong cupping.

- Febrile diseases in adults
- Boils
- Skin complaints that are accompanied by Heat syndrome
- It is particularly beneficial in the treatment of Hot-type 'Bi' syndrome (see Chapter 12)
- Blood or Qi stagnation patterns
- Muscular cramps
- Sports injuries
- All musculoskeletal complaints including lower back ache and sciatica.

CASE 9-4 A 58-year-old Man (Paralysis and Pain on Both Shoulders, Accompanied by Constant Headaches)

Mr A was involved in a motorcycle accident 30 years ago (when he was 18 years old), which left him semi-paralysed in both legs. As a result he uses walking crutches to move about and to get in and out of his car. In the last few years he has undergone further spinal operations, which did not improve his condition, especially after the most recent operation to his cervical spine, which left him with weaker arms and a weaker grip in both hands. This has made him less active and more frustrated. As a direct result of his reduced mobility, he has gained weight and suffers from constant occipital headaches.

Pulse. Rapid and slippery.

Tongue. Red body proper, curling up.

Medication. Antidepressant and cocktail of painkillers.

Observation. Solid build, overweight, has good diet, likes talking, even temperament but can easily get depressed.

TCM Diagnosis. Distorted channels (due to numerous surgical interventions) with Damp-Heat dominating.

Treatment Principle. Restore the Blood and Qi circulation to the distorted channels and remove the Damp-Heat.

Cupping application. Strong cupping treatment applied for several months, concentrating on the entire upper back, including, neck and the shoulders, reduced the headaches considerably and returned strength to his arms and improved his grip. Because of his inability to climb onto a treatment couch I am unable to do cupping to his lower back. However, on a few occasions I have applied Strong cupping to his lower back while in a sitting position. He continues his booster treatment whenever he can manage to come to the clinic.

Additional Therapy. Acupuncture and massage.

CASE 9-5 A 55-year-old Woman (Frozen Shoulder Syndrome – Adhesive Capsulitis)

Mrs S suffered from 'frozen shoulder syndrome' to her left arm for over 4 months when she came to see me. She complained of 'stiffness and pain' when trying to move or lift her arm. She reported that the 'condition is getting worse with each day'.

Pulse. Rapid.

Tongue. Red and shiny, without any coating.

Medication. Blood pressure tablets and eight painkillers daily.

Observation. She is not able to remove her coat without help. Pain is clearly visible in her face when she attempts to lift her arm.

TCM Diagnosis. Yin deficiency is her general outlook, with Qi and Blood obstruction in the shoulder joint.

Treatment Principle. Remove obstruction and restore Blood and Qi circulation to the joint.

Cupping Application. First three visits, six cups using Light to Medium cupping technique were employed to the troubled shoulder with no benefit to the patient. Therefore, at follow-up visits I decided to increase the suction to Strong method and she agreed (I had to obtain her permission as this was going to cause darker cupping marks on her shoulder). After a further four treatments with Strong cupping technique, encircling the entire shoulder with six cups, her shoulder mobility improved and the shoulder pain was greatly reduced.

Additional therapy. Acupuncture, massage and Chirali Old Remedy®1 herbal ointment.

Summary Points

- Draining
- Influences the pathogenic internal Wind
- Blood and Qi manipulation
- Blood and Qi stasis
- Benefits Excess (Shi) conditions
- Can cause severe dark cupping marks that can last 2–3 weeks
- Can cause blisters
- Contraindicated for children, elderly and the frail.

MOVING CUPPING – TUI GUAN FA (DRAINING METHOD)
 **See online materials**

As mentioned earlier, Moving cupping is the second most draining of all the cupping methods. *This method manipulates more the Blood and to a lesser degree the Qi and the Fluids.* The object of this treatment technique is to apply Strong cupping therapy to a much larger area of the body by the moving / sliding action of the cup. Like the Strong cupping method, the patient should have strong Qi before Moving cupping is employed, in order to withstand the not-so-gentle pulling and moving action of the cup. Without any doubt this is the most painful cupping method that I know. For this reason alone, if the patient's Qi is deficient (Xu), and therefore weak, Moving cupping can only help to diminish it further. It is mostly applied to the Bladder channel on the back (about 1.5 and 3 inches [4–8 cm] either side of the spine; see Fig. 4.8), upper back, shoulders, upper and lower limbs and the abdomen (around the navel), especially when treating stagnation of any kind, excess Heat conditions, or some neurological conditions such as paralysis or post-stroke weaknesses (when treating post-stroke patients with Moving cupping one should always take into consideration the possibility of a local neuralgic pain that is sometimes associated with stroke patients).

Application

The practitioner should oil the skin liberally and apply a single medium-sized and medium-strength cup to the treatment area (Fig. 9-5). (The edges of the glass cup should be smooth and even, with no cuts or chips. This is one method in which bamboo cups are of no use, as their sharp edges make it impossible to move the cup once the suction takes hold.) The suction is controlled by gently moving the cup in any one direction. The cup should move freely and without a great deal of effort from the practitioner. If the suction is too strong, moving the cup will be difficult and any attempt to do so will result in extreme pain or a nasty bruise mark. The practitioner grips the cup with one hand while supporting the skin close to it with the other, then pulls and slides the cup alongside the meridian using long strokes. Short, up-and-down movements should be avoided as this may cause unnecessary pain. If there is difficulty in moving the cup this is an indication that the suction is too strong and needs to be reduced. The primary objective of Moving cupping is to resolve Blood stagnation / stasis, manipulate the excess pathogens and bring up the Heat to the surface of the skin. After only a few strokes pink / reddish cupping marks will appear alongside the line of movement (Fig. 9-5B). The more internal Heat that is present, the quicker the redness (Sha) will appear (Youbang & Liangyue, 1989). *This can also be used as a diagnostic tool as far as the Blood stasis and internal Heat are concerned; deep and darker cupping marks indicate a Full (Shi) condition, lighter cupping marks indicate deficient (Xu) conditions, requiring less vigorous treatment.* During the application of Moving cupping some air will almost always enter the cup, resulting in loss of suction. All that is necessary is to reapply the cup and continue with the movement. Rubber or silicon cups are also ideal for Moving cupping treatment.

One should avoid using the Moving method on an open wound or lesion, as the skin must be smooth and unbroken. The first session should not exceed 5 minutes, building up to a maximum of 20 minutes per session.

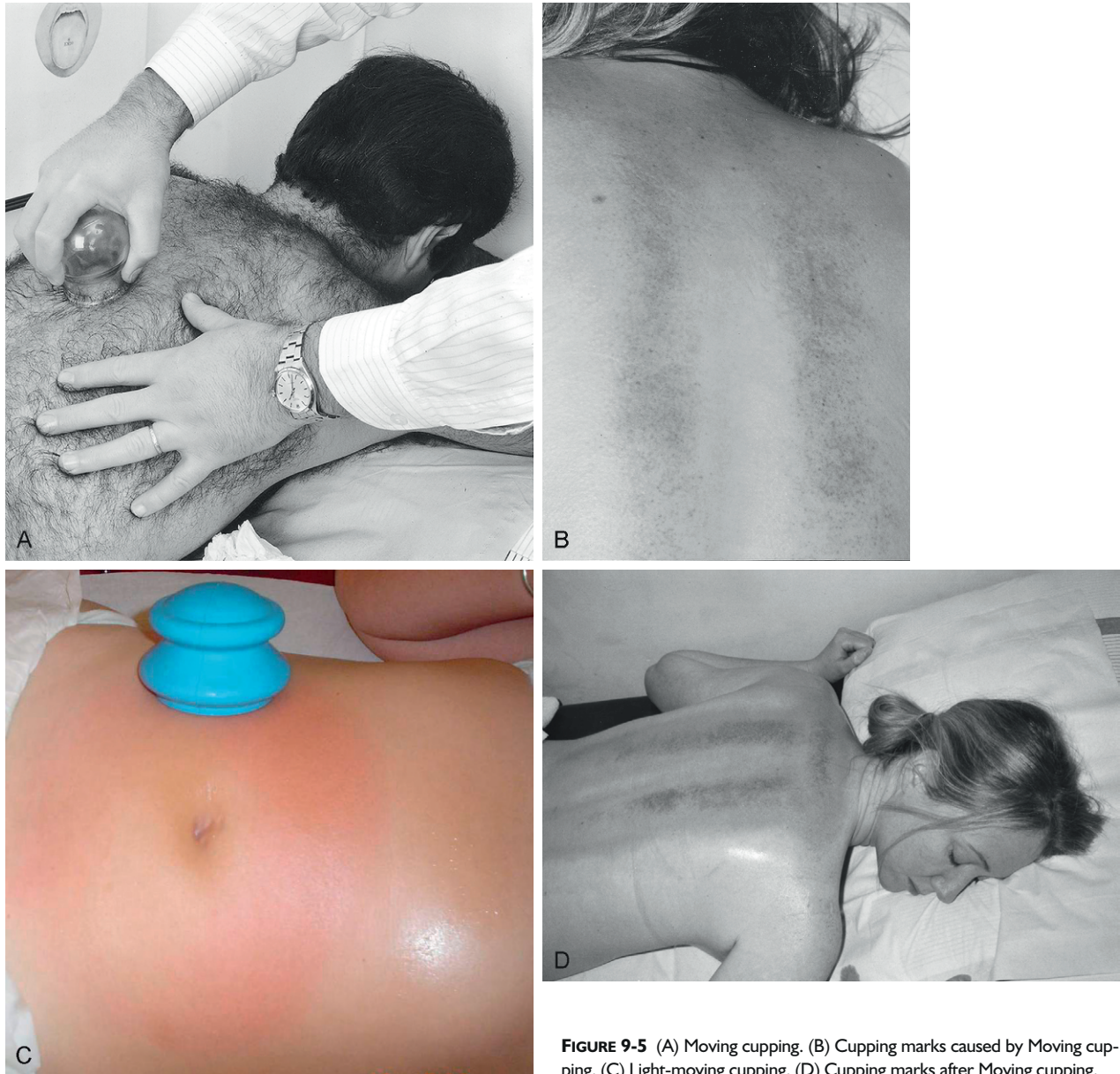


FIGURE 9-5 (A) Moving cupping. (B) Cupping marks caused by Moving cupping. (C) Light-moving cupping. (D) Cupping marks after Moving cupping.

Conditions Most Suitable for Moving Cupping Method

This treatment is not recommended for children under the age of 16, or for the frail and weak. For Hot skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis and acne, or painful Hot 'Bi' syndrome, Moving cupping is most beneficial, though it is important to avoid direct application to lesions. This is also the most powerful method for manipulating the lymphatic circulation and, therefore, requires particular attention when dealing with any form of lymphoedema:

- Febrile diseases
- Musculoskeletal complaints
- Muscle or tendon relaxation
- Sports injuries
- All cosmetic cupping techniques including cellulite, facial, body toning and weight loss programmes.

CASE 9-6 A 35-year-old Woman (Breast Pain)

A 35-year-old female patient came to see me complaining from 'heavy pain' over her right breast. Previously she had seen her GP and was referred for numerous tests, which all came back negative. This kept her awake at night and mentally worried.

Pulse. Rapid, with Liver pulse prominent.

Tongue. Pale, shiny, wet with whitish coating.

Medication. Vitamins and painkillers (tramadol).

Observation. Tall and a good build, pale on the face, swims twice a week and works in an office. She gets more colds than her colleagues in the office (does not like her job!).

TCM Diagnosis. Wind-Cold dominating (particularly the Liver channel), accompanied by Liver-Qi stagnation.

Treatment Protocol. Remove the Wind-Cold and soothe the Liver-Qi.

Cupping Application. Moving Cupping was employed on both Bladder channels (the inner and the outer BL channel), employing Medium strength suction. To the front of body, Moving cupping was used with much less suction, to the area under the clavicle and following the breast contour, moving towards the breast bone and under the breast. Finally, a single large cup with Light suction was applied over the right nipple. The pain was reduced each week, and she recovered completely seven treatments later.

Additional Therapy. Acupuncture and herbal remedies.

CASE 9-7 A 70-year-old Man (Hip and Thigh Pain)

70-year-old Mr A came to see me complaining of a 'stabbing pain' that travelled from his left hip to the upper part of his left thigh. There was no pattern to the pain; it could appear any time of the day or night and last between a few seconds and a few minutes. This condition appeared almost a year after he had undergone 'successful hip replacement' surgery.

Pulse. Forceful at all levels.

Tongue. Good colour and body.

Medication. Simvastatin and aspirin (75 mg).

Observation. Mr A was a gentleman of slim build, who enjoyed his daily walks and good food. He has been taking cholesterol lowering statin medication for a number of years. My initial reaction was that the statin might be the cause of his stabbing pain. However, I was reassured that his GP ordered a 'full blood count' several months before and it was established that the cholesterol medication was not the cause of his complaint.

TCM Diagnosis. Blood stasis/stagnation due to his previous hip replacement surgery.

Treatment Principle. Remove the stagnation and open the channels to the front and the outer thigh (Stomach, Bladder and Gall Bladder).

Cupping Application. On each visit about 6–7 minutes of Medium strength, Moving cupping was applied to the Bladder, Gall Bladder and the Stomach meridians, taking the total treatment time to about 20 minutes each time, with cupping movements towards the knee. During the initial few sessions he often complained of 'feeling tender' during the cupping treatment, but after the third visit his tolerance level much improved. By the time he reached the sixth session, he reported that his pain was much less frequent and less severe. After having further six weekly treatments, he was completely pain free.

Additional Therapy. Acupuncture, massage and Chirali Old Remedy®1 herbal ointment.

Summary Points

- Draining
- It could be tender or even painful during the application
- Resolve Blood stasis
- Brings the internal pathogenic Heat to surface
- Avoid over the open wounds
- Avoid over the recent trauma
- Can cause blisters or dark cupping marks
- Contraindicated for children, elderly and the frail.

LIGHT-MOVING CUPPING (EVEN METHOD)

 See online materials

For many years I have practised and advocated Moving cupping only with patients with relatively 'Excess/Full' Qi or conditions. During recent years, however, I have practised Moving cupping on many patients outside this category with favourable results. This came about when I was treating a

female patient with severe arthritic pains in her neck and shoulders. Following acupuncture treatment, 10 minutes of Light cupping were usually applied to the local area. On one occasion she described the pain as 'sharp and moving'. On hearing this description, I decided to employ Moving cupping on that particular day but with much-reduced suction power (see Fig. 9-5E), as she often complained of feeling 'tired and lethargic'. The following day she phoned to express her satisfaction as she had slept 'very well and comfortably' owing to the lack of pain and discomfort in her back and neck. On each subsequent visit she almost insisted on Light-moving cupping! The lymphatic system (Fluids) and the Qi are mostly manipulated by this method.

Application

The practitioner should prepare the patient as in Light cupping technique but use only a single cup. This can be glass, rubber or a silicon type cup. Oiling liberally the treatment location, the practitioner then applies a single Light strength cup, and without delay starts moving the cup to the desired direction with long strokes. At all times, one hand is moving the cup while the other is supporting the skin.

During the application of the Light-moving cupping method, slight pinkish cupping marks appear on the skin, normally following the direction and movement of the cup (see Fig. 9-5D). At no time should deep, dark red cupping marks be seen. All cupping marks should fade away within a day or two. The whole object of Light-moving cupping is to *disperse* stasis / stagnation without draining the patient. Energetically, it is an *even method, and effects mostly the Qi and, to a lesser extent, the Blood*. All Moving cupping techniques require special attention, particularly when there is a broken skin surface, where there are scratches, cuts, bruise marks, open wounds or when skin moles are present (avoid cupping over an open wound or over a mole).

Conditions Most Suitable for Light-Moving Cupping Method

- When treating children under 16 years old
- Old and frail patients
- Oedema; all conditions where oedema is present including the joints and the extremities
- Lymphoedema (opposite side of the body must be used)
- Stress release cupping-massage
- All cosmetic cupping procedures including facial and cellulite treatment
- Weight-loss programme
- Infertility
- Immune deficiency syndromes
- Cancer patients
- Multiple sclerosis patients.

CASE 9-8 A 30-year-old Woman (Facial Oedema)

Ms C for many years has been suffering from swollen/puffy eyes and face, especially during her period. She has no other health complaints.

Pulse. No significance.

Tongue. Pale and wet (almost dripping).

Medication. In the past she had taken diuretics but had since stopped.

Observation. Pale complexion, tall, slightly overweight.

TCM Diagnosis. Cold-Damp accumulating in the Upper Jiao.

Treatment Principle. Warm the Lungs, Spleen and Stomach and move the Fluids.

Cupping Application. *Medium strength warm cups* were first applied to the front and the Back-Shu points of the body; LU-1 Zhongfu, Ren-12 Zhongwan, Liv-13 Taichong, Ren-6 Qihai, Ren-4 Guanyuan, ST-25 Tianshu, BL-12 Fengmen, BL-13 Feishu, BL-20 Pishu and BL-23 Shenshu. This was followed by 15 minutes of Light-moving cupping to the face and the neck, moving the cups alongside the neck towards the clavicle. Ms C received a total of 14 treatments, after which her condition was moderately improved. She was also given dietary advice relating to her 'cold Stomach, Spleen and Lung' condition.

Additional Therapy. Acupuncture, moxibustion, dietary and herbal medicine.

CASE 9-9 An 8-year-old Boy (Stomach Pains and Poor Appetite)

An 8-year-old boy complaining from stomach pains and loss of appetite for 5 days was brought to me by his parents, who are also my patients.

Pulse. Rapid.

Tongue. Refused to show.

Medication. None.

Observation. His body weight to his height ratio is good; he does not look unwell. Clinging to his father, he does not answer my questions (gazing at the floor or looking to his father); his father is often on business trips abroad; he does not like going to school!

TCM Diagnosis. Liver-Qi stagnation pattern is the dominant feature. Resentment and anger towards his father, manifesting in stomach pains and loss of appetite.

Treatment Principle. Soothe the Liver-Qi.

Cupping Therapy. On the first two visits, I managed to massage his back and the stomach region only. On follow-up visits, using a silicon cup I applied Light-moving cupping (clockwise) circling the umbilicus. To the back of the body, I applied Light-moving cupping on the Bladder channel. Five minutes of cupping application to each side were applied. After three treatments the stomach pain was much reduced, he also felt better, and he stopped attending.

Additional Therapy. Moxibustion.

Summary Points

- Even method
- Benefits the lymphatic circulation
- Moves the Fluids
- Moves the Qi
- Treats oedema
- Suitable for all ages.

NEEDLE CUPPING (DRAINING METHOD)

🖱 See *online materials*

(For acupuncture practitioners only.)

Needle cupping is mostly used for Re (Hot) types of painful 'Bi' syndrome – that is, red and painful muscular areas as well as the knee and elbow joints, where there is a need to stop the pain and remove the excess pathogenic Heat at the same time. The practitioner should administer the acupuncture treatment as intended under normal circumstances, leaving the needles in place as long as necessary. (One can reduce the acupuncture treatment time by 10–15 minutes if Needle cupping is intended to follow it.)

Application

Following the acupuncture treatment, the practitioner leaves the needles in position and applies oil to the surrounding skin. One should choose bamboo or large glass cups in order to accommodate the needles, and apply the cups over them (Fig. 9-6A). A Medium to Strong application is necessary if the

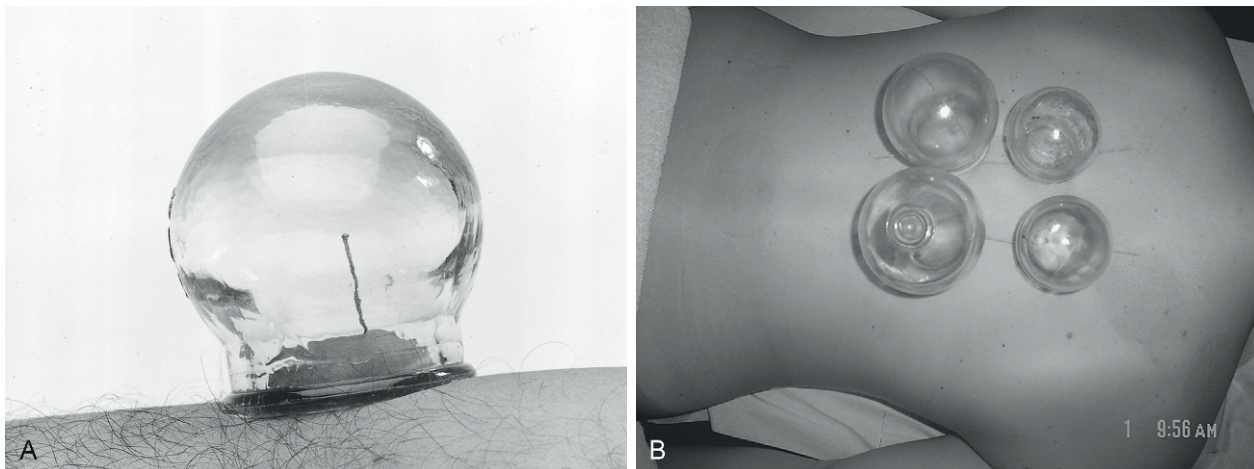


FIGURE 9-6 (A) Needle cupping: use a tall cup over the needle. (B) Through-and-through needle cupping.

treatment is over the joints and Weak to Medium if the treatment is over muscular areas, retaining the cups in position for 10–15 minutes. Some blood may be drawn into the cup through the needles; this is quite acceptable, especially if the suction is Strong. Needle cupping should be avoided on the Back-Shu points, as there is a real danger of the cup pushing the needle in deeper thereby causing a pneumothorax. To be on the safe side, short 0.5–1-inch (1.25–2.5 cm) needles are used during the treatment. This is one occasion when tall bamboo cups are preferable to the more rounded glass cups, as their height is ideal for needle clearance, making the application much safer. However, when cupping treatment is combined with the 'through and through needle technique' the application is quite safe (see Fig. 9-6B). This method is not recommended for children of any age.

Conditions Most Suitable for Needle Cupping Method

- 'Hot-Re' type 'Bi' syndromes
- Arthritis
- Rheumatoid arthritis complaints
- Osteoarthritis complaints
- Muscular stiffness, spasm or pain
- Sports injuries.

CASE 9-10 A 60-year-old Male (Swollen and Painful and Knee Joint)

60-year-old Mr M came to see me complaining of a swollen and painful knee joint. Eighteen months ago he had a fall while cycling, injuring his right knee. At the time he was referred for X-ray, which showed a degree of soft tissue damage and no broken bone. He was put on anti-inflammatory medication, which he took for 17 months (he stopped the medication because it caused stomach upsets).

Pulse. Rapid and forceful.

Tongue. Red body, no coating.

Medication. He has recently stopped taking diclofenac (anti-inflammatory).

Observation. The patient is well built, and likes activity (he swims, walks and cycles). Unfortunately, since his fall he has

stopped most of his activities and he is worried about putting on weight. The knee is looking reddish, swollen and painful and he is unable to bend it fully.

TCM Diagnosis. Blood and Fluid stagnation caused by the fall (Hot Bi).

Treatment Principle. Remove pathogenic Heat, disperse stagnation and restore the normal Blood–Fluid circulation to the joint.

Cupping Application. Needle cupping was applied to three points on the knee; both Xiyan (Extra points) and ST-34 Liangqiu. After eight visits, the redness and the swelling were much reduced and he was able to bend his knee fully.

Additional Therapy. Acupuncture and Chirali Old Remedy®1 herbal ointment.

CASE 9-11 A 45-year-old man (Stiff Neck with Pain)

Mr R developed a stiff and painful neck following a routine gardening chore 10 days previously. His neck complaint worsened a few days later and he decided to come to see me. He drives to work and describes the journey as 'almost impossible'.

Pulse. Nothing significant.

Tongue. Good body and colour.

Medication. Generic pain tablets.

Observation. Mr R, a keen gardener, had developed neck pain while practising his hobby 10 days' previously. He stands tall with a good posture. He sweats profusely when doing physical work, particularly when gardening.

TCM Diagnosis. Wind-Cold attack.

Treatment Principle. Remove the pathogenic Wind-Cold from the channels in the neck and relax the neck muscles.

Cupping Application. Needle cupping to the neck; 2-cun long needles are used to apply through and through needle technique to BL-10 Tianzhu, pointing towards BL-11 Dashu. Cupping is performed by using small-sized cups (number 1 or 2) to the middle of the neck, between the needles. Mr R received total of four treatments after which he was able to move his neck freely and drive without pain.

Additional Therapy. Acupuncture and Chirali Old Remedy®1 herbal ointment.

Summary Points

- Draining
- For acupuncture practitioners only
- ‘Hot Bi’ syndrome
- Disperses pathogenic Heat
- Treats joints
- Contraindicated for children of all ages.

HOT NEEDLE AND MOXA CUPPING – AI GUAN FA (TONIFYING METHOD)

See online materials

(For acupuncture practitioners only.)

Moxa (*Artemisia vulgaris*) is a great warming herb used by many practitioners for removing Wind-Cold and tonifying the Yang, Qi and Blood. It comes in many forms: the loose type, the smokeless charcoal type, the round, long, cigar-shaped dry type, and most recently the ready-cut form (smokeless or dry), which fits over the needle handle. It is the last type that is used during the Needle cupping treatment. Moxa rolls are divided further according to their strength (i.e. Medium-moxa, Hot-moxa and very Hot-moxa).

There are two versions of Hot cupping therapy: (a) Hot Needle cupping and (b) Moxa cupping (without the needle). Both the Hot Needle cupping and the Moxa cupping are used where Cold patterns are predominant as well as pain. Here, acupuncture can be used to move the channels open the obstruction and relieve the pain, and moxa is employed to heat the needle and transfer the heat to the acupuncture point in order to warm and tonify that particular energetic influence point. This method is particularly useful in the treatment of Yang deficiency patterns, especially when these are accompanied by Wind-Cold or Cold-type ‘Bi’ syndromes (see Chapter 12). Non-acupuncture practitioners wishing to use this warming method can do so by applying hot moxa with a piece of ginger placed on the skin and a loose or a piece of rolled moxa over a piece of ginger. A similar therapeutic effect will be achieved through this method.

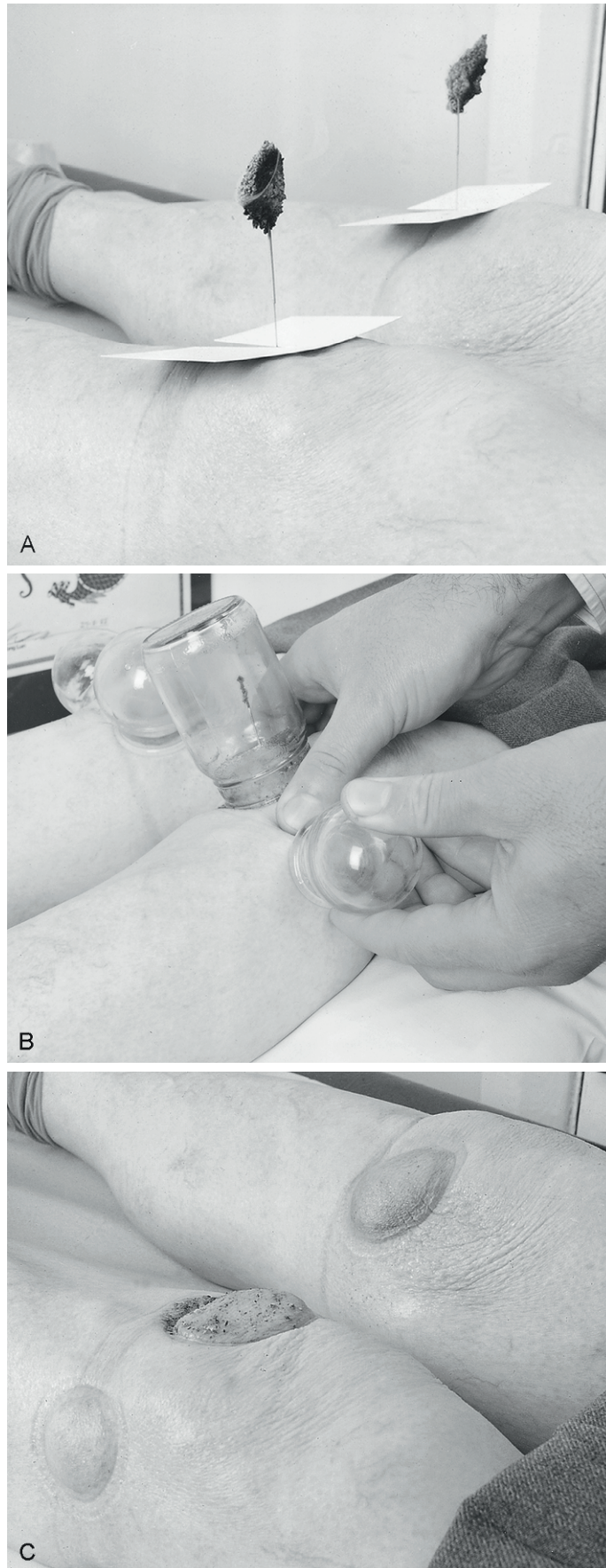
Application

This technique also requires a great deal of care and patience. Use 1.5-inch (4 cm) needles to the desired points, cut about 0.5 inch (1 cm) of moxa roll and insert it on the coil of the needle. Place a small piece of fire-resistant paper or a piece of foil under the needle and on top of the skin to provide protection from falling ash. Light the moxa roll and wait until it burns out completely. This might take up to 10 minutes. At this stage, when the moxa roll is completely burnt out, the ash on top of the needle is cold or just warm. The needle, however, remains hot for a considerable length of time. Without touching the needle or the ash, apply the cup over the needle (Fig. 9-7A–C) (the same therapeutic effect can be achieved if the ash is tapped off the needle while retaining the needle in place). When the desired cupping time is over, remove the cup gently and, before removing the needle, shake off the ash by holding a tray under the needle and tapping gently on its base. For Moxa cupping only, cut a thick slice of fresh ginger and place it on the desired point. Cut about a quarter inch (0.5 cm) moxa from a moxa stick and place it over the ginger. Light the moxa and wait until the patient feels the warmth though the ginger on the skin. At this point apply a cup over the burning moxa. While the suction is taking place the heat from moxa should diminish. If, however, the moxa continues to get hot, remove the cup and the moxa from the skin without further delay.

Conditions Most Suitable for Hot Needle Cupping Method

- Hot Needle cupping is especially beneficial in the treatment of Wind-Cold Bi syndromes of the joints as well as muscular complaints
- Spleen or Stomach ‘Cold-type’ patterns
- Asthma

FIGURE 9-7 (A) Moxa cupping: light the moxa and wait until it is completely burnt out before applying the cup over it. (B) Although the moxa is burnt out, the needle is still very hot and continues transferring heat to the acupuncture point. (C) After Moxa cupping.



- Cough
- Anaemia
- Yang Xu (deficiency)
- Qi Xu (deficiency)
- Blood Xu (deficiency)
- Male and female infertility
- Lower back ache especially due to Kidney-Yang deficiencies
- Adult incontinence
- Impotence
- Frigidity
- Dysmenorrhoea (painful periods).

(Hot Needle cupping treatment is not suitable for children under the age of 16.)

CASE 9-12 A 42-year-old Woman (Painful Periods and Feeling Tired)

Mrs S has for some years been suffering from severe periods pains (worse on the first 2 days), so much so that she has to stay in bed wrapped up with hot water bottle on her stomach and back. Her arms are painful with loss of strength in her grip. She is a hairdresser and stands on her feet all day. Most days she also feels 'totally exhausted' before the day is out.

Pulse. Faint at all levels (difficult to feel the pulse, almost non-existent).

Tongue. Thin, wet and pale.

Medication. Multivitamins.

Observation. Mrs S is a slightly built woman with two small children and a business to run, looks tired and pale. She works 6 days a week, mostly standing on a concrete shop floor.

TCM Diagnosis. Chronic Yang deficiency with Cold Bi pattern dominating (she has drawn the pathogenic Cold through her feet to the abdomen).

Treatment Principle. Tonify the Lungs, Spleen and Kidney-Yang and warm the channels.

Cupping Application. A total of 12 sessions of Empty cupping were given, to the Front-Mu and the Back-Shu, Lung, Spleen, Stomach and the Kidney points. Also, Hot Needle cupping was applied to LI-15 Jianyu, LI-11 Quichi, ST-29 Guilai, Ren-4 Guanyuan and Ren-6 Qihai. Towards the end of her course her pains were much reduced and her energy returned so she no longer felt exhausted but 'a little tired at the end of the day'.

Additional Therapy. Acupuncture and moxibustion.

Summary Points

- Tonifying
- Tonify Yang, Qi and Blood
- Treats Wind-Cold (internal/external)
- Cold Bi
- Contraindicated for children under 16 years old.

EMPTY (FLASH) CUPPING – SHAN GUAN FA (TONIFYING METHOD)

👉 See online materials

Empty cupping is also called Flash cupping for its speed during the application. This is actually a Medium to Strong cupping method, but is applied rapidly and the cups remain in place for a very short time (i.e. less than 30 seconds). *It is mainly used to stimulate and strengthen the Wei Qi, also in lesser degree to move the Blood and Qi in the weak and frail.* The rather short duration is enough to stimulate the Wei Qi, Qi and Blood, but not enough to drain. It is therefore a tonifying as well as dispersing technique, particularly when dealing with acute onset of Wind-Cold or Wind-Heat invasion, in the weak and frail, and in children under the age of 16. Flash cupping also has an especial uplifting effect on the Heart-Qi, particularly when emotions are involved that may cause Heart-Qi stagnation.

Application

Empty cupping is applied on the back as well as the front of the body, and the technique is simple. The practitioner should oil the area to be cupped, place up to 12 cups near at hand, light a large cotton-wool ball and apply the cups simultaneously (Fig. 9-8). Once all the cups are in place, one must start removing them without delay, beginning with the first to be applied, then, when all have been removed, reapply them immediately in different positions. This can be repeated for between 5 and 10 minutes. Slight pinkish cupping marks will appear all over the back (Fig. 9-9), but these will fade away within a day or two.

Conditions Most Suitable for Flash (Empty) Cupping Method

- This is a favourite cupping method for children
- All stress and emotional-related conditions
- Tiredness
- Low fevers in children or the elderly
- Common cold
- Feeling of cold or fever
- Digestion complaints
- Gastrointestinal problems.

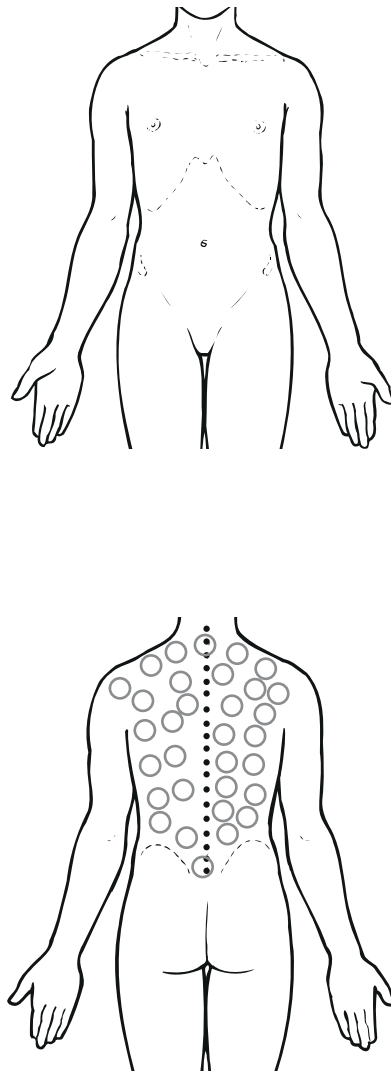


FIGURE 9-8 Empty cupping method: during this method of treatment up to 10 cups can be employed at the same time.



FIGURE 9-9 Following the Empty cupping treatment, no significant cupping marks should appear on the skin.

CASE 9-13 A 52-year-old Man (Lung Cancer with Cough and Phlegm)

52-year-old Mr R had been diagnosed with lung cancer, a year and half ago. During the last 14 months he received radiotherapy and chemotherapy treatments. He now feels quite tired and has a persistent cough with phlegm.

Pulse. Forceful at the superficial and empty on the deeper levels.

Tongue. Dry, red body colour with thick yellow coating.

Medication. Generic cough syrup.

Observation. Mr R, a well-built gentleman, reported that in the last 12 months he also lost a lot of weight, and his appetite diminished too. He also gets wheezy and tired easily, especially when he is engaged in conversation for more than few minutes.

TCM Diagnosis. Lung-Qi empty, due to cancer of the lungs, accompanied by Stomach and Spleen Yin deficiency.

Treatment Principle. Tonify the Kidney-Yang, Spleen and the Stomach-Yin and strengthen the Lung-Qi.

Cupping Application. Flash cupping application to the Front-Mu points of the Lungs, Stomach, Spleen and the Liver. To the back of the body; the Back-Shu points of the Lungs, Liver, Spleen, Stomach and the Kidneys were employed. Six treatments later his phlegm and cough were much reduced. Unfortunately he took a bad turn due to a brain metastasis and died soon after.

Additional Therapy. Acupuncture and herbal medicine.

CASE 9-14 A 28-year-old Woman (Emotional, Feeling Low and Tearful)

Ms M, a 28-year-old teacher has been feeling tearful and emotional for number of months ('low and tearful, I can easily stay home all day'). This condition is affecting her professional career as well her home life. She reports that this condition appeared without any warning, 'it just came about quite suddenly', which can happen any time of the day, while at work or at home. Her sleep pattern also changed and she often wakes up during the night. She has no particular dream pattern.

Pulse. Faint at all levels.

Tongue. Thin, pale and no coating.

Medication. Over the counter iron tablets and herbal medicine.

Observation. Softly spoken and slim-built professional woman with a 3-year-old child. Bringing up her child, and her teaching, have allowed her energies to fade away and diminish completely. In the past she has been diagnosed as 'anaemic'. Alongside her soft voice (ant-like), her movements also appeared to be in slow motion.

TCM Diagnosis. Chronic Blood and Qi deficiency resulting in Heart-Blood deficiency and disturbed Shen.

Treatment Principle. Tonify the Spleen, Stomach, Lungs, Liver, and the Kidneys and calm the Shen.

Cupping Application. Empty cupping treatment, covering the entire upper and the lower abdomen, including the Ren-8 Shenque, was applied to the front of the body. To the back of the body, Empty cupping treatment was applied to the entire upper and lower back, making sure that each cupping session did not exceed 15 minutes, on each side of the body. At around the seventh visit she reported feeling 'better and brighter'. She had a further 12 visits and now comes for a booster treatment once a month.

Additional Therapy. Extensive moxibustion, acupuncture, herbal medicine, and dietary advice.

Summary Points

- Tonifying
- Stress- and emotional-related complaints
- External Wind-Cold
- External Wind-Heat
- Benefits children, elderly and the frail adults.

BLEEDING/WET/FULL CUPPING – XUE GUAN FA (DRAINING METHOD)

See online materials

Wet cupping mostly affects the Blood and the 'internal Wind'. This was the most favoured and practised cupping method of all by the early practitioners, who, particularly in Europe and Middle Eastern countries, employed the Bleeding cupping technique in order to purge foul blood, which was considered the source of disease, from the body. Leeches were also widely used for the same purpose. Today this method is used in the treatment of a sudden increase in blood pressure, high fevers, Blood stasis, and in discharging pus from boils and furuncles which represents Excess, with Blood Heat, Blood-Poison and stagnation. Bleeding cupping is also administered to treat a variety of sports injuries. A renowned expert in Chinese sports medicine and martial arts expert Tom Bisio in his book *A Tooth from the Tiger's Mouth* (Bisio, 2004, pp. 164–172) describes in detail the application and the effectiveness of Bleeding cupping when treating sports injuries, in particular acute sprains and strains (see Chapter 14). From the above description it can be seen that this method is suitable only for adults with strong, Excess (Shi) Qi, and not for children or the elderly. Most Middle Eastern patients almost *insist* on having Bleeding cupping when visiting my clinic; some I refuse to bleed because of their inappropriate current energetic constitution. To a great extent the majority of Middle Eastern countries still practise Bleeding cupping as the only method, sometimes compromising the health of the patient. However, it is quite interesting when we look at Chapter 16 (Evidence-Based Cupping Research) where the authors Hui-juan Cao and Jian-ping Liu underline Wet/Bleeding cupping technique as the most effective cupping therapy method!

Application

The acupuncture point Dazhui (Du-14) on the first thoracic vertebra is the point that is empirically bled during most treatments. Bleeding Du-14 has multifunctional properties; as well as removing the excess Heat from the Blood level it also tonifies the Du channel. However, other Blood stasis syndromes in different parts of the body can also be bled. The practitioner should have the patient sitting on a chair, resting and supporting his head on a pillow in front of him. The Dazhui point is first sterilized with alcohol and a very small incision (0.5 cm or the length of a rice grain) is made with a surgical blade or, using a plum-blossom needle, the point firmly tapped for a short time to cause bleeding (Fig. 9-10AB). I normally use the latter technique. Once the point is bled, a Strong cupping method is applied to it using a large cup (size 4 or 5). The blood will quite quickly be observed being drawn slowly into the cup (Fig. 9-11, Colour Plate Figure 4AB). If the incision is adequate, between 20 and 100 mL of blood can be drawn into the cup. However, if the patient is taking any form of anticoagulant drug this may result in more bleeding.

Removing the cup also requires attention and care; the practitioner should refrain from hurrying as this may cause the blood to spill or spray from the cup. Within a maximum of 5 minutes the bleeding should stop. If the bleeding continues, finger pressure is applied on the cut for a few minutes. Most of the blood in the cup will be only semi-coagulated and therefore still quite fluid. Before removing the cup, the practitioner should wear disposable surgical gloves on both hands, providing protection from direct contact with the blood. If the patient is in a prone position, ask them to sit upright and place a large paper towel under the cup with one hand. While pressing the upper edge of the cup with the other hand, remove the cup in an upward motion, making sure that the mouth of the cup remains covered with the paper towel at all times. Alternatively, ask the patient to roll over to one side, lifting one shoulder off the pillow. Once in this position the practitioner can easily remove the cup without any spillage of blood (Fig. 9-12). Once the cup is removed cover the cut with a plaster. It is not recommended to bleed more frequently than once a month, and no more than 100 mL of blood should be drawn at any



FIGURE 9-10 (A, B) Bleeding cupping: before the cupping application, bleed the point using a plum-blossom needle or a blade and nip a small, 0.25 cm cut.

one time. The colour of the blood extracted also has a diagnostic value: the darker the colour the longer the stasis/stagnation has been present, and the opposite is true for lighter-coloured blood.

Conditions Most Suitable for Bleeding/Wet/Full Cupping Method

- Acute hypertension
- Sports injuries with Blood stasis
- High fevers (only where excess pattern is present. Avoid Bleeding cupping on patients with High fevers who accompany Deficiency syndromes)
- Boils and furuncles
- Blood-Poison
- Blood stasis
- Skin condition (psoriasis)
- Removing toxins and poison from bites and stings
- Insect bites.

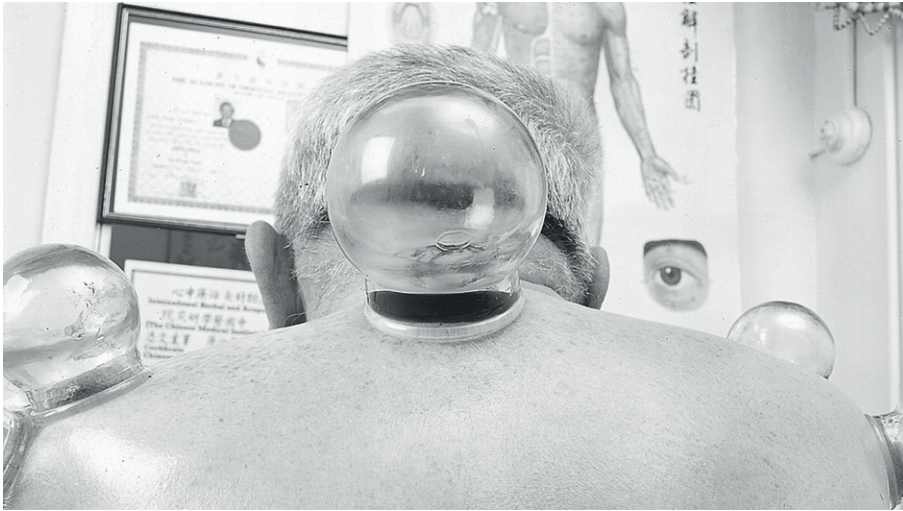


FIGURE 9-11 Application of a cup over the bleeding point: up to 100mL of blood can be extracted by this method.

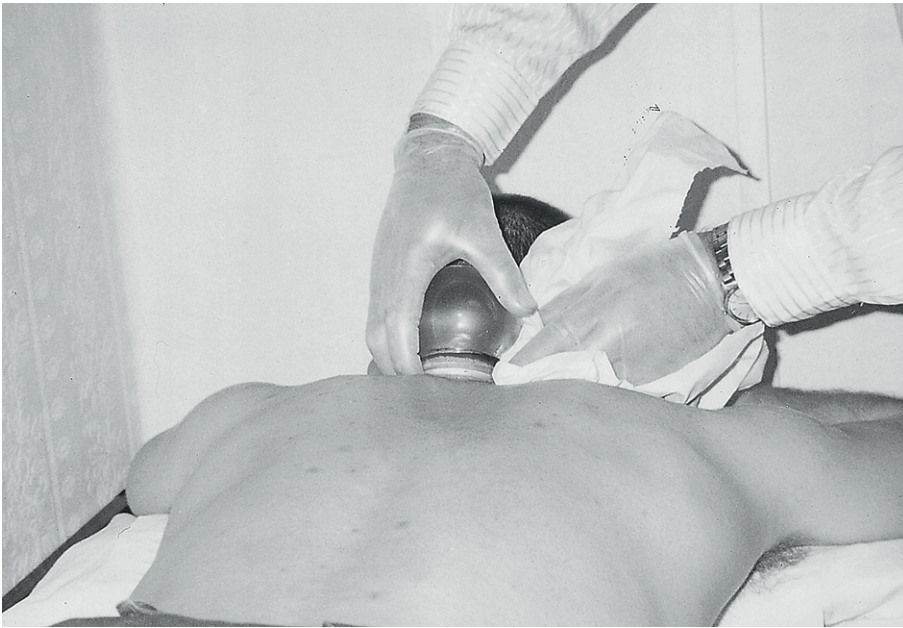


FIGURE 9-12 Removal of the cup: wear surgical gloves and hold extra paper towels to the mouth of the cup before gently removing it.

CASE 9-15 A 25-year-old Woman (Repetitive Strain Injury [RSI])

25 years old Ms E came to see me complaining of a painful right wrist and elbow. The pain appeared 3 weeks ago after some heavy gardening, which involved digging as well as weeding. The pain gets worse when lifting heavy objects and when rotating the arm.

Pulse. Nothing significant.

Tongue. Good body colour and shape.

Medication. Painkillers when needed.

Observation. Both, the wrist and elbow are slightly red and swollen with pain when palpating. She is a strong athletic-looking lady with good posture, who likes being busy. She works in an office and her elbow and the wrist pain get worse towards the end of the day. She is also right-handed.

TCM Diagnosis. ‘Hot Bi’ caused by repetitive use of the joints (RSI).

Treatment Principle. Remove the pathogenic Heat and open the channels.

Cupping Application. After four sessions of Bleeding cupping to the wrist and her elbow, using plum-blossom needle technique, her pains were much reduced and the redness of the joints had almost disappeared.

Note: Using plum-blossom needle technique on the bony joints may be painful. Therefore, much care and attention are necessary when treating bony joints with this technique.

Additional Therapy. Acupuncture.

CASE 9-16 35-year-old Woman (Skin Condition – Psoriasis)

35-year-old Ms A had been suffering from the skin condition ‘psoriasis’ for as long as she can remember. The red skin patches covered with scales were mostly concentrated on both legs and nowhere else. If scratched the patches would bleed easily. This condition affected her confidence, and prevented Ms A taking part in outdoor activities, in particular during the summer season.

Pulse. Normal.

Tongue. Red body proper slightly swelled with no coating.

Medication. In the past, she had used hydrocortisone creams extensively but has now stopped.

Observation. Ms A, of Indian origin and an accountant by profession, reported that the patches sometimes shrink but never disappear completely.

TCM Diagnosis. Yin deficiency dominating, Heat-Poison accumulating in the Lower Jiao.

Treatment principle. Treat Yin deficiency, nourish the skin and clear the Heat-Poison.

Cupping Application. On each visit the treatment would commence with Moving cupping for about 7 minutes, to the Bladder channel on the back of the body. This would always be followed with Bleeding cupping to Du-14 Dazhui. Further Bleeding cupping applications to the psoriasis patches were applied, choosing a different lesion on each visit. *The local bleeding method helps disperse the Heat-Poison and the Blood stasis as well as allowing fresh blood to replace the stagnant Blood within the lesion.* Five months of weekly treatment improved the skin texture, eliminated the scales and returned the skin to a pinkish colour, compared with its red-purple colour before.

Additional Therapy. Acupuncture and herbal medicine.

Summary Points

- Draining
- Treats Blood and ‘internal Wind’
- Excess conditions
- Disperses pathogenic Blood Heat
- Blood stasis
- Sports injuries
- Skin conditions
- Contraindicated for children, elderly and the frail.

HERBAL CUPPING – YAO GUAN FA (TONIFYING METHOD)

 See online materials

Herbal cupping offers dual benefit to the recipient, through simultaneous application of cupping therapy accompanied with herbal prescription. A herbal decoction, its nature depending on the condition of the patient, is prepared and applied directly on the relevant points as described below. The warm herbal prescription is expected to be absorbed through the skin adding its healing powers to that of the cupping therapy.

Application

There are two varieties of Herbal cupping technique: (a) the *Bamboo boiling method* and (b) the *Herbs in the cup* method.

(a) The Bamboo Boiling Method

A few bamboo cups are required, plus a relatively deep pan, water, metal clamps, some form of fire, and herbs in a prescription based on the treatment.

Put the herbs and the bamboo cups into the deep pan and cover them with water (glass cups become too hot and are therefore not suitable for this method). Bring the water to the boil and simmer for 30 minutes (Fig. 9-13). Prepare the patient in the normal way, and expose the part to be cupped. When practitioner and patient are both ready, lift one cup at a time out of the pan with a metal clamp (Fig. 9-14). Wait briefly to ensure that the bamboo cup is not too hot or that boiling water is not falling on the patient, and then apply the cup in the normal fashion using fire and cotton wool. Once again, extra caution must be observed not to cause burns or blisters with hot cups



FIGURE 9-13 Herbal cupping: herbs, according to prescription, are boiled together with bamboo cups.

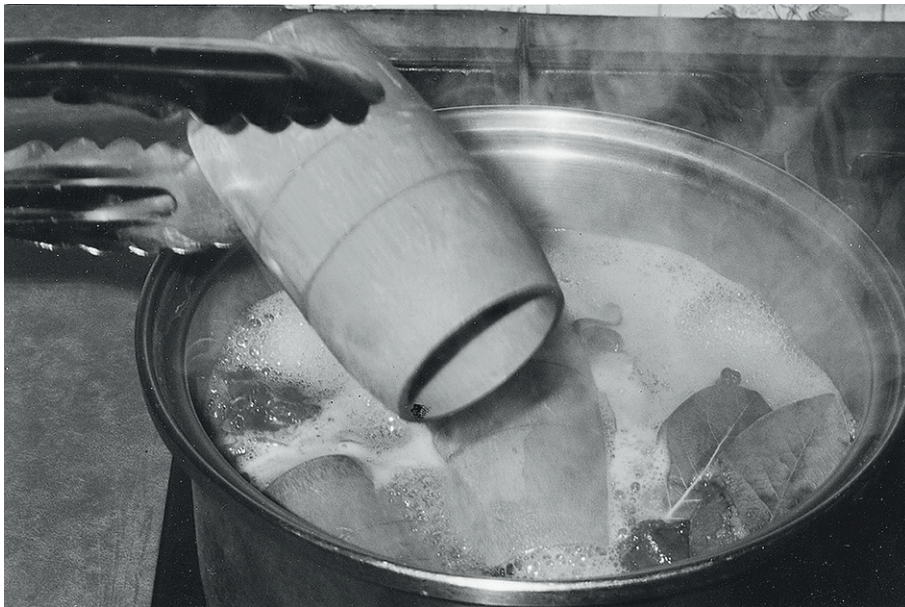


FIGURE 9-14 Long metal clamps are necessary to lift the cups out of the boiling decoction.

or hot water dripping onto the skin. The best precaution is to try the cups on your own skin before applying them to the patient. The herbs are absorbed by the bamboo cups, which in turn transfer their healing properties to the patient. This method is usually employed when external pathogens such as Cold, Damp and Wind attack the body, causing stiffness and aching, particularly in the neck and shoulders (common cold, asthma and cough). Although this treatment is not recommended for children of any age, it is particularly beneficial for the elderly and the frail with Blood and Qi deficiency that is accompanied with Cold or Wind pathogens. Cups can be left on for between 10 and 20 minutes.



FIGURE 9-15 Herbs in a cup

(b) Herbs in the Cup Method

The herbal prescription is prepared separately and left to cool to a tepid temperature. The lukewarm herbal prescription is then poured into a bamboo, glass, or a vacuum-operated cup (quarter filled) (Fig. 9-15AB). If a vacuum-operated cup is used, once the quarter-filled cup is turned on the skin the air inside the cup is withdrawn and suction is achieved. If the fire cupping method is used, fire is briefly and quickly introduced into the cup and turned on the skin. The suction should be Medium to Strong method, but pay attention not to cause blisters on the skin.

Conditions Most Suitable for Herbal Cupping Method

- Asthma
- Emphysema
- Cough
- Digestive complaints
- Gastrointestinal complaints
- Bed-wetting in children
- Incontinence in adults
- Male and female infertility
- Qi deficiency syndromes
- Blood deficiency syndromes.

Summary Points

- Tonifying method
- Prepare herbal prescription in advance
- Apply only when the herbal prescription is lukewarm (tepid).

WATER CUPPING – SHUI GUAN FA (EVEN METHOD)

🖱 See online materials

As far as I am aware this is one of the least used and practised cupping methods. First, the practitioner needs to be quite experienced and fast to use this particular method; secondly, it can be quite

messy if not correctly applied at the first attempt. The Water cupping technique disperses the inhibited (subdued) Lung-Qi, regulates the Lung-Qi and resolves Phlegm (Youbang & Liangyue, 1989).

Application

The technique involves filling a glass or bamboo cup one-third full with warm water and employing the cupping process in a rather quick fashion. Hold the cup close to the patient with one hand, bring it close to the point to be cupped and insert the burning cotton wool, swiftly and simultaneously turning the cup onto the skin. When performed properly, no water spillage occurs. If the application is performed slowly some water spillage is inevitable. This should, however, present no problem as the water used is only warm and will cause no harm.

A pistol-handle cupping apparatus is also suitable for this method. Quarter-fill the cup with warm water and place it on the desired location. Extract the air by using the pistol pump. Although removing the cup may cause anxiety with some practitioners, when the removal technique is followed correctly there is no need for apprehension or panic! First, make sure that the skin is oiled liberally with massage oil before employing Water cupping. When the desired cupping time is over, hold the cup with one hand while supporting the skin close to the cup with the other. Start sliding the cup towards the outer aspect of the body (i.e. over the shoulder). In this way the cup can be removed without getting the patient wet (Fig. 9-16A, B).

Water cupping is especially beneficial for asthma sufferers. It is particularly beneficial in the treatment of dry cough and asthmatic conditions with thick and sticky phlegm that is difficult to bring up. This technique is used to treat children as well as the adults. Water cupping is mostly employed on BL-13 (Feishu). There are usually no dark cupping marks left with this method.

Conditions Most Suitable for Watercupping Method

- Dry-type asthma
- Dry-skin conditions



FIGURE 9-16 (A–C) Water cupping. (D) Sliding the water up over the shoulder.

Summary Points

- Even method
- Disperses inhibited (subdued) Lung-Qi
- Dry-type asthma
- Dry-type cough
- Dry-skin conditions
- Requires rapid application technique.

ICE CUPPING (COOLING) METHOD

Ice cupping was first introduced to me by a physiotherapist while I was in Poland, who also explained that this technique is often used to treat acute as well as chronic muscular pains and swellings in the hospital's physiotherapy department where she worked. This method of cupping is mostly employed when the cause of the stagnation is a pathogenic Heat that needs to be dispersed. Therefore, Ice cupping is considered a 'cooling' method. Energetically speaking, it appears to go against all TCM teaching – even the term '*ice or cold*' signifies death! However, many physiotherapists around the world employ alternating Heat and Cold applications for the purpose of dispersing stagnation, reducing pain and swelling. But this is an example of where the diversity of cultures can be seen in action, by practitioners employing opposite techniques to treat similar conditions!

I also feel that a technique that has been successfully used in hospitals for many years in different parts of the world deserves a mention. For many hundreds of years when treating sprains and strains Western-trained doctors and physiotherapists have employed ice therapy as the emergency 'first-aid tool'. This is because ice application on the skin tissue produces a temporary anti-inflammatory action, resulting in a local reduction of swelling. It must also be kept in mind though that ice application may cause Qi as well as Blood and channel blockage. The Ice cupping technique has a multifunctional application: it cools the tissue, which causes the shrinking action in order to reduce swelling, at the same time the movement of the cup helps to disperse the stagnation (Fig. 9-17).



FIGURE 9-17 Ice cupping.

Application

The application is very simple: an ice cube is inserted into the cup and a vacuum is obtained in the usual manner. (Rubber, silicon, fire or pump action cups can all be employed.) Usually a Medium cupping strength is obtained while the cup is constantly moved over the lesion.

Caution: Ice burn can occur on the skin if the ice cube is not moved constantly and it is left on a dormant position. This can happen even after as short a period such as 2–3 minutes!

Conditions Most Suitable for Ice Cupping Method

- Acute or chronic muscular pains accompanied by Heat patterns
- Acute or chronic joint complaints accompanied by Heat pattern
- Acute or chronic muscular spasm
- All Heat patterns and chronic sports injuries.

Summary Points

- Cooling
- Cooling and dispersing
- Brings the pathogenic Heat to surface
- Sport injuries.

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10

CUPPING THERAPY ON CHILDREN AND ADULTS

CHAPTER CONTENTS

CUPPING THERAPY ON ADULTS, 120
HOW OFTEN CAN CUPPING BE APPLIED?, 121

HOW MANY CUPS ARE USED IN ONE SESSION?, 121
CHILDHOOD DISEASES, 122
REFERENCES, 122

Treatment with cupping therapy of the children's ailments are discussed in Chapters 12 and 13.

From the very first week of opening my practice in Melbourne, Australia, I have been treating children with both acupuncture and cupping. However, it was not until I studied paediatric acupuncture in England, with Julian Scott, who is a prominent acupuncturist and a teacher on the subject, that I discovered the full potential of Chinese medicine in the management and treatment of children's diseases.

Children in general respond well and do not mind cupping therapy (Fig. 10-1, Colour Plate Figure 5A-H). They certainly prefer it to acupuncture! Children under the age of 7 require just a little extra care and patience during treatment, as at this age they are quite unpredictable; one minute they appear quite calm and relaxed, and the next, with little warning, they can turn into quite the opposite: weepy, angry and restless. It should also be remembered that the skin of a child of this age is extremely sensitive and vulnerable. I would certainly not recommend any method of cupping for children under the age of 4 years unless the practitioner is quite experienced in treating the very young. It is also worth bearing in mind that some children are afraid of fire. Before the treatment proceeds, therefore, the accompanying parent should be given a full explanation of the cupping procedure so as to gain their cooperation. If necessary, apply a small cup to the inside of the parent's arm, and let the child touch and feel the cup. Distraction of any kind by the parent will help to relax the child, inspire confidence and divert the child's attention from the practitioner during the application.

Small glass cups (size 1-2) are the most suitable for children under 7; sizes 2 and 3 can be used for children under 16. The golden rule to follow when treating children under 7 is that the maximum treatment time allowed is just 3 to 5 minutes, and for those between 7 and 16 years old 5 to 10 minutes. The strength of the cups should also be Empty, Weak or Medium cupping method; Strong, Moving, Needle, Moxa or Full cupping methods should *never* be employed on children under the age of 14 years old. For those practitioners who have limited experience of treating children, I would strongly recommend the use of cupping apparatus that does not require fire (i.e. rubber, silicon, pistol-handle cupping sets and screw-top cupping sets). Children also mark and blister easily, and a close watch is consequently needed at all times. A gentle massage after the cupping treatment will take away the apprehension and relax the child, and at the same time build a good rapport for future treatment.

Cupping treatment on children particularly in Europe was very common practice until the early 1900s. In an English medical publication *Aids to Paediatric Nursing* (Duncombe, 1962), cupping therapy is mentioned as one of the methods used to treat pleurisy resulting from 'complication of tuberculosis'. In Chinese clinics, cupping treatment is employed daily, and ten treatments constitute a single course. In the West, as with acupuncture, treatment once weekly is considered normal. However, treatment up to three times a week is possible when dealing with acute conditions such as fever or Wind-Cold attack. Bamboo cups are contraindicated during the treatment of children's conditions owing to their



FIGURE 10-1 Children are quite relaxed during cupping treatment.



FIGURE 10-2 Cupping in children: (A) digestive complaints; (B) fever; (C) fever.

sharp edges, which may cause a cut on delicate skin, and the inability of the practitioner to monitor the condition of the skin during the process.

Usually the Back-Shu, local and the abdominal points are cupped. For a more comprehensive study on children's treatment with Chinese medicine, see [Scott & Barlow \(1999\)](#). In my clinics I regularly employ cupping treatment to treat children's conditions, sometimes on its own and sometimes to

supplement the acupuncture treatment. My recommendation is: as we are not sure when the complete meridian system is fully developed in children (some sources indicate this as being by 5 years old and some by the age of 7), rather than concentrating on the specific acupuncture point treatment a more generalized, non-specific treatment protocol should be followed when dealing with children under 7 years old. A prominent TCM practitioner and teacher Stephen Birch, in his book *Shonishin: Japanese Pediatric Acupuncture* (Birch, 2011), also prescribes cupping (Kyukaku) in the treatment of a large variety of children's conditions (Fig. 10-2).

CUPPING THERAPY ON ADULTS

When cupping therapy is employed on adults it is extremely difficult to categorize and select the treatment modality using age alone as a guide. I cannot think of a general formula that could be put into practice according to age. Therefore, almost always, observation, listening, tongue and pulse diagnosis should be used to determine the correct cupping method and duration for each particular patient. No matter how strong or healthy the patient may appear to be, the above precautions will ensure the correct cupping application. In this way the patient receives the full benefit, instead of their existing Qi possibly being depleted as a result of the wrong method being chosen. Avoid performing unnecessarily long sessions of cupping, especially during the first and second visits, as this can also deplete Qi. Also, during the first and second visits, use Weak to Medium methods in preference to the more draining methods detailed in Chapter 9.

A 'dizzy' or 'light-headed' feeling after treatment is a common complaint among patients over 60 years of age. To prevent this, help the patient to get up from the couch when the session is over, and a few minutes before they need to get dressed. Generally speaking, patients under the age of 60 tolerate cupping quite well. Once or twice weekly treatment can safely be administered (with the exception of



FIGURE 10-3 An artist patient's impression of the cupping treatment!

Bleeding cupping). When treating patients over the age of 60, and in particular over the age of 70, more attention has to be directed towards the skin condition. This is the age where skin becomes dehydrated and subcutaneous fat content much reduced, causing the skin to become emaciated and fragile. It is also common to observe bruising marks under the skin, sometimes caused by a knock or the medication patients are on. Avoid direct cupping therapy on such bruises. Never, ever, apply Strong or Moving cupping over such dehydrated skin. Cupping marks will also take longer to dissipate and vanish completely.

HOW OFTEN CAN CUPPING BE APPLIED?

In Far Eastern countries such as China, Vietnam and Korea, and in particular in Chinese hospitals, cupping is applied every day until the patient gets better. Children and adults are treated similarly. Ten sessions are considered as one course, and a week of rest is given between courses. In the West, however, once a week is considered the normal frequency. The concept of pain differs considerably between East and West. The expectations are also quite different. Where Eastern patients generally have a higher pain threshold, the reaction of Westerners is just the opposite. Maybe the saying 'no pain, no gain' is appropriate here!

When treating children under the age of 14, once-a-week treatment is considered an acceptable frequency. Adults under the age of 60 can be treated as much as twice a week (with the exception of Bleeding cupping). For adults over the age of 70, once-a-week treatment is sufficient. However, as mentioned earlier, during the 'acute' stage of disease, three times a week or even treatment once every other day can be given with favourable results. Similarly, in all age groups, when Light, Empty or Light-moving cupping is employed the treatment frequency can be increased to as much as once every other day. This is because Blood, Qi and the lymphatic fluids are gently stimulated rather than forcefully manipulated, which overtaxes the whole energetic and metabolic system.

HOW MANY CUPS ARE USED IN ONE SESSION?

This very much depends on the geographical location where the treatment is taking place (Fig. 10-4); in Far Eastern countries, for instance, I have seen as many as 50 cups being applied during the same session! In these countries the patients receiving the treatment also expect this amount of cups, otherwise they may get disappointed and will let you know! Also the only two methods usually employed



FIGURE 10-4 (A, B) The number of cups applied in treatment varies depending on local tradition – treatment of back points using different numbers of cups.

are Strong and the Bleeding cupping methods. There is normally nothing in between! In the West, however, it is more usual for practitioners to use between 6 and 12 cups during one session. In our household, both my grandmother and my mother used two cups at a time, and I too grew up practising cupping with fewer cups rather than a great number. My personal advice to the practitioners wishing to employ 20 cups or more is to avoid using the Strong suction method and to limit the suction strength to Light or Medium technique for a short period of time (i.e. less than 15 minutes).

CHILDHOOD DISEASES

(See Chapters 12 and 13.)

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